



## **The Relationship between Online Game Addiction and Verbal Bullying in Adolescents at a Junior High School in Makassar**

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### **Article Info**

#### **Article History**

Received: May 03, 2025

Revised: May 19, 2025

Accepted: May 23, 2025

#### **Keywords:**

Online Game

Addiction, Verbal

Bullying

### **ABSTRACT**

Online gaming addiction is the habit of playing games excessively, exceeding 3-4 hours per day. Meanwhile, verbal bullying is a form of bullying carried out through words such as nicknames, reproaches, and cruel criticism. According to WHO (2020), the prevalence of verbal bullying in Indonesia reached 37% in girls and 42% in boys. The purpose of this study aims to determine the relationship between online game addiction and verbal bullying in adolescents at Advent Makassar Junior High School. The method of this study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. The number of respondents was 69 students who were taken through total sampling technique. The research instrument is a questionnaire that has been validated and used to measure the level of online game addiction and the intensity of verbal bullying. The results showed that of the 50 respondents who experienced online game addiction, 41 students (82.0%) had a high level of verbal bullying, and 9 students (18.0%) had a low level. While of the 19 respondents who were not addicted, 7 students (36.8%) experienced high verbal bullying and 12 students (63.2%) at a low level. The chi-square test results show a p value = 0.001 ( $p < 0.05$ ), which means there is a significant relationship between online game addiction and verbal bullying. The conclusion is that there is a significant relationship between online game addiction and verbal bullying behavior among adolescents at Advent Junior High School Makassar.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Online gaming addiction is classified as a behavioral control disorder characterized by an excessive tendency to engage in gaming activities, often at the expense of other essential tasks or responsibilities, in pursuit of self-gratification (Rizai, 2021). Verbal bullying, commonly found among both male and female adolescents, involves the use of hurtful language, including teasing, slander, and harsh criticism. This form of bullying is often subtle and can occur even in the presence of adults, frequently going unnoticed while potentially escalating into more serious forms of aggression (Wulandari & Jasmin, 2023; Kristi, 2023).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), the prevalence of bullying in Indonesia is estimated at 37% among girls and 42% among boys. The types of bullying reported

include sexual harassment, physical aggression, and psychological intimidation. Furthermore, data from the Indonesian Child Protection Committee recorded 1,567 cases of bullying within the educational sector, with 76 adolescents identified as victims and 12 as perpetrators. These findings highlight the urgent need for preventive interventions.

In 2023, the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) reported a total of 30 bullying incidents in schools, marking an increase from 21 cases in the previous year. Approximately 80% of these incidents occurred in schools under the Ministry of Education and Culture, while the remaining 20% took place in institutions overseen by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Pradana, 2024). Observations and interviews conducted at Adventist Junior High School in Makassar revealed that most students spent their break times playing online games, which were often accompanied by verbal bullying during gameplay.

A study by Safari et al. (2023) identified a significant association between playing online games and verbal aggressive behavior, with a Spearman Rank test yielding a p-value of 0.028. Similarly, research by Yulianingrum et al. (2024) found a positive correlation between online gaming frequency and verbal aggression, with a p-value of 0.001 and a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.349$ , indicating a moderate relationship. These findings suggest that increased exposure to online games may contribute to heightened verbal aggression among adolescents. Based on this evidence, the present study seeks to examine the relationship between online game addiction and verbal bullying among junior high school students in Makassar.

## METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach to investigate the relationship between online game addiction and verbal bullying among adolescents. The research was conducted from July to August 2024 at a junior high school in Makassar. The target population consisted of students who regularly played online games, totaling 69 individuals. A total sampling technique was utilized, resulting in a sample size equal to the population.

Inclusion criteria for participation included students who actively played Mobile Legends, Free Fire, or PUBG Mobile, and who consented to participate as respondents. Exclusion criteria included students who did not play any of the aforementioned games or who declined to participate in the study.

## RESULT

Among the 69 respondents identified as experiencing online game addiction, 41 individuals (82.0%) were found to be exposed to high levels of verbal bullying, whereas 9 individuals (18.0%) experienced low levels of verbal bullying. Conversely, among the 19 respondents who were not addicted to online games, 7 individuals (36.8%) were exposed to high levels of verbal bullying, and 12 individuals (63.2%) were exposed to low levels of verbal bullying. The results indicate a statistically significant relationship between online game addiction and the incidence of verbal bullying among adolescents at Advent Junior High School Makassar. This was supported by a chi-square test result yielding a p-value of 0.001 ( $p < \alpha = 0.05$ ).

### Sample characteristics

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of the 69 respondents based on their demographic characteristics. The highest proportion of respondents was aged 14 years (27 individuals, 39.1%), followed by 13 years (25 individuals, 36.2%), and the lowest at 12 years (17 individuals, 24.6%). Regarding gender, the majority were male (43 individuals, 62.3%) and the remainder were female (26 individuals, 37.7%). In terms of grade level, both Grade VIII and Grade IX had the highest number of respondents (27 individuals each, 39.1%), while Grade VII had the fewest (15 individuals, 21.7%).

**Table 1.** Distribution of the Demographic Characteristics of Students at Makassar Adventist Junior High School, Grades VII to IX, in 2024.

Variables		n	%
Age (Years)	12 Years	17	24,6
	13 Years	25	36,2
	14 Years	27	39,1
Gender	Female	43	62,3
	Male	26	37,7
Grade Level	Grade VII	15	21,7
	Grade VIII	27	39,1
	Grade IX	27	39,1
Total		69	100,0

Source: Primary Data, 2024

### Univariate Analysis

Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents based on online game addiction and verbal bullying among students in Grades VII to IX at Adventist Junior High School Makassar. Of the total respondents, 50 students (72.5%) met the criteria for online game addiction, while 19 students (27.5%) were classified as not addicted to online games. In terms of verbal bullying, 48 students (69.6%) experienced a high level of verbal bullying, whereas 21 students (30.4%) experienced a low level of verbal bullying.

**Table 2.** Distribution of the Characteristics of Research Variables among Students of Makassar Adventist Junior High School, Grades VII to IX, in 2024.

Variables		n	%
Online Game Addiction	Addicted	50	72,5
	Not Addicted	16	27,5
Verbal Bullying	High	27	69,6
	Low	43	30,4
Total		69	100,0

Source: Primary Data, 2024

### Bivariate Analysis

Table 3 shows that out of 50 respondents who were addicted to online games, 41 individuals (82.0%) experienced high levels of verbal bullying, while 9 individuals (18.0%) experienced low levels of verbal bullying. In contrast, among 19 respondents who were not addicted to online games, 7 individuals (36.8%) experienced high levels of verbal bullying, while 12 individuals (63.2%) experienced low levels of verbal bullying. The results of the Chi-square test revealed a p-value of 0.001 ( $p < \alpha = 0.05$ ), indicating a statistically significant relationship between online game addiction and verbal bullying among students at Advent Junior High School Makassar.

**Table 3.** Association Between Online Game Addiction and Verbal Bullying Among Students in Grades VII to IX at Adventist Junior High School Makassar in 2024

Online Game Addiction	Verbal Bullying				Total		<i>p-Value</i>
	High		Low				
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Addicted	41	82,0	9	18,0	50	100,0	0,001
Not Addicted	7	36,8	12	63,2	19	100,0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>69,6</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>30,4</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

Source: Primary Data (processed), 2024

### DISCUSSION

This study revealed that the majority of respondents were aged 14 years (39.1%), which falls within the early adolescent range (12–18 years). Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by identity exploration and increased curiosity toward new experiences, including digital activities such as online gaming (Febrianti & Fitriyanti, 2023). The data also indicated that male respondents (62.3%) were more dominant than female respondents (37.7%). This finding is consistent with Safari et al. (2023), who reported that male adolescents are more likely to use online games as an outlet for emotional expression, including anger and frustration, thereby increasing their tendency to exhibit aggressive behaviors during gameplay.

The findings of this study further demonstrated that a significant proportion of students at Advent Junior High School Makassar exhibited signs of online game addiction. Indicators included playing for more than three hours per day, experiencing difficulty in self-control while playing, and a tendency to continue playing while holding their device persistently. These symptoms align with the criteria for gaming addiction as outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and previous research. In this context, online game addiction was found to be significantly associated with verbal bullying behavior. Students identified as addicted were more likely to use harsh or inappropriate language during gameplay. This finding supports the study by Fajar Ramadhan et al. (2023), who highlighted that individuals with a high level of gaming addiction are more likely to engage in "trash talking," a form of verbal aggression frequently observed in online gaming environments.

Compared to earlier studies, this research confirms a consistent pattern whereby the frequency and intensity of gaming serve as key predictors of verbal aggression. However, unlike

previous studies that often focused on physical forms of aggression, this study emphasizes the prevalence and impact of verbal aggression, which is often less visible but potentially just as harmful. Moreover, excessive gaming has also been associated with physical health issues, including fatigue, sleep disturbances, and impaired metabolic function (Jebarus et al., 2023). These findings underscore the importance of parental involvement in regulating children's screen time—ideally limited to one to two hours per day—and providing active supervision during gameplay.

Furthermore, the study found a high incidence of verbal bullying occurring during gaming activities. Students were observed to express harsh or emotionally charged words as a reaction to defeat or in-game stress. This observation aligns with Sinaga et al. (2024), who reported that players of games like Mobile Legends often externalize negative emotions through inappropriate language, which can extend into real-life social interactions. If left unmanaged, such behavior could lead to psychological issues including stress, anxiety, and depression (Suripto et al., 2023).

Statistically, the current study showed that 82% of students addicted to online games engaged in verbal bullying behavior, a substantially higher proportion compared to 36.8% among non-addicted students. The chi-square analysis confirmed a significant association ( $p = 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), reinforcing findings by Rondo et al. (2020), who emphasized that exposure to violent games such as Free Fire, PUBG, and Mobile Legends can provoke both verbal and physical aggression.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to a growing body of evidence that digital addiction impacts not only physical and mental health but also patterns of negative social interaction among adolescents. Practically, the findings highlight the need for increased attention from parents and schools in guiding digital behavior, limiting gaming exposure, and fostering emotional regulation. In terms of policy implications, this research supports the urgency of developing school-based regulations on digital technology use, as well as implementing digital literacy and adolescent mental health programs to mitigate the risks of gaming-related aggression.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates a significant relationship between online game addiction and verbal bullying among students at Advent Junior High School Makassar. The findings indicate that students in the school are affected by both online game addiction and verbal bullying, and a correlation exists between these two variables. These results highlight the need for collaborative efforts between schools, students, and parents to address this issue. Schools should actively engage students in constructive activities and provide education regarding the adverse effects of online game addiction and verbal bullying. Students who are addicted to online games should be encouraged to reduce their screen time and utilize their leisure time for more positive and productive activities.

Parents also play a crucial role in monitoring and guiding their children to prevent the onset of online game addiction. Their involvement is essential in fostering a supportive environment that discourages addictive behaviors and promotes healthy interpersonal interactions. Further research is recommended to explore the underlying factors that

contribute to the emergence of both verbal bullying and online game addiction, in order to develop more targeted and effective intervention strategies.

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